

we had—Secretary Rumsfeld is going to brief here in a second.

Q. Was it a handover to U.S. troops or—

The President. I think it was a—I don't think it was—I think it was, as I understand it—and again, the Secretary of Defense will be briefing, the Defense Department will be briefing—that it was a facilitated rescue. In other words, there were people—and I say “rescued” because it's a very unstable part of the world still, obviously, and you never know what the Taliban is going to do. They, first and foremost, detained these people against their will and imprisoned them. And I was deeply concerned for their safety. But the really incredibly positive news is that, thanks to help on the ground and thanks to our U.S. military, they're now safe in Pakistan.

I've got to go to dinner with my guests. I've got my guests. You'll have to talk to the Secretary of Defense.

Operation Enduring Freedom

Q. Should the Taliban surrender now, sir?

The President. It's up to the Taliban to make that decision. But we're not going to end our mission until we accomplish the mission, and the mission is Al Qaida and terrorists and terrorist training camps.

One of the things I said in front of Congress was that one of the conditions were that these humanitarian aid workers be

turned over. That part of the mission is complete. We still want Al Qaida, and we want to make sure that Afghanistan is no longer a safe haven for terrorist activity. That has yet to be accomplished.

In the meantime, we're making substantial gains on the ground. But this is—I told the American people, this could take a while. And I'm patient, and I am steady. And our military is—and our troops on the ground are on the hunt to accomplish the objective. And we will stay there until we do accomplish the objective.

Thank you all. I've got to go have dinner—

Visit of Russian President Vladimir Putin

Q. Are you going—

The President. I've got my guests waiting—

Q. Did the rain ruin the dinner?

The President. No, it's perfect. Listen, any time it rains in Texas, it enhances the dinner. [Laughter] Thank you all for bringing it.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:18 p.m. at the Bush Ranch. In his remarks, he referred to rescued humanitarian aid workers Heather Mercer and Dayna Curry of the United States, Peter Bunch and Diana Thomas of Australia, and George Taubmann, Margrit Stebnar, Kati Jelinek, and Silke Duerrkopf of Germany.

Remarks With President Vladimir Putin of Russia and a Question-and-Answer Session With Crawford High School Students in Crawford November 15, 2001

President Bush. Thank you all. Sit down, please. Thank you all for that warm welcome. This is a great day for central Texas. It's a great day because Laura and I have had the honor of welcoming the Putins to

our beloved State. It's a great day because it's raining. [Laughter]

It's a great day, as well, because I just got off the telephone with two central Texas women: Heather Mercer, who used to live in Crawford, and Dayna Curry. They

both said to say thanks to everybody for their prayers. They realize there is a good and gracious God. Their spirits were high, and they love America.

I remember clearly when I stood up in front of the Congress and said, we have three conditions to the Taliban: One, release those who are being detained; two, destroy terrorist training camps so that country can never be used for terror again, either against us or against Russia, for example; three, bring Al Qaida to justice.

Yesterday I was able to report to the Nation that one of those conditions had been met, with the release and rescue of the humanitarian aid workers. And make no mistake about it, the other two will be met—particularly bringing Al Qaida to justice.

I wanted to bring President Putin to Crawford. I wanted him to see a State that Laura and I love. I particularly wanted to be able to introduce him to the citizens of Crawford, because this part of the State represents the independent-minded nature of Texans. It represents the hard-working Texans, people who have great values—faith and family. The people here, Mr. President, love their country, and they like countries that work with America to keep the peace.

We had a great dinner last night; we had a little Texas barbecue, pecan pie—[laughter]—a little Texas music. And I think the President really enjoyed himself. I told him he was welcome to come back next August—[laughter]—to get a true taste of Crawford. [Laughter] He said, “Fine, and maybe you’d like to go to Siberia in the winter.” [Laughter]

It’s my honor also to introduce President Putin to Crawford. I bet a lot of folks here, particularly the older folks, never dreamt that an American President would be bringing the Russian President to Crawford, Texas. [Laughter] A lot of people never really dreamt that an American President and a Russian President could have established the friendship that we have.

We were enemies for a long period of time. When I was in high school, Russia was an enemy. Now, the high school students can know Russia as a friend; that we’re working together to break the old ties, to establish a new spirit of cooperation and trust so that we can work together to make the world more peaceful.

Russia has been a strong partner in the fight against terrorism. It’s an interesting story for me to report. I was on Air Force One the day of the attack, working my way back to Washington via Louisiana and Nebraska—[laughter]—making sure that the President was safe and secure. The first phone call I got from a foreign leader was President Putin. He told us that he recognized that I had put our troops on alert. I did so because, for the first time in a long period of time, America was under attack. It only happened once—twice, I guess—the War of 1812 and Pearl Harbor.

In the old days when America put their troops on attack, Russia would have responded and put her troops on alert, which would have caused the American President maybe to put a higher alert, and Russia a higher alert, and all of a sudden we would have had two conflicts instead of one. But not this President. This President recognized we’re entering into a new era, and his call was, “Don’t worry; we know what you’re up against. We stand with you, and we will not put our troops on alert, for the good of the United States of America.”

I brought him to my ranch because, as the good people in this part of the world know, that you only usually invite your friends into your house. Oh, occasionally, you let a salesman in, or two, but—[laughter]. But I wanted the Putins to see how we live. And even though we changed addresses, our hearts are right here in our home State.

We’ve got a lot to do together. We’ve had great discussions in Washington, as well as here in Texas. We’re both pledging to reduce the amount of nuclear weapons,

offensive weapons, we have in order to make the world more secure. We're talking about ways to cooperate in antiterrorism and antiproliferation. We're talking about ways to make sure our economies can grow together. What we're talking about is a new relationship—a relationship that will make your lives better when you get older, and it will make your kids' lives better as they grow up.

But in order to have a new relationship, it requires a new style of leader. And it's my honor to welcome to central Texas a new style of leader, a reformer, a man who loves his country as much as I love mine, a man who loves his wife as much as I love mine, a man who loves his daughters as much as I love my daughters, and a man who is going to make a huge difference in making the world more peaceful, by working closely with the United States. Please welcome Vladimir Putin. [*Applause*]

President Putin. Dear friends, when we were riding here in the Presidential car, I'll divulge to you a small secret of ours. The First Lady of the United States told me, "You know, some kind of special people live here. These are people with a special kind of pride of their position and of their heritage." And the more I come to know the President of the United States, the more I realize that the First Lady was right: He is right from the heart of Texas, and he is a Texan. And herself, being a wise woman, she complimented her husband in an indirect and very sensible way. [*Laughter*]

My wife and myself are also trying to help ourselves as we go along this life. And it gives me pleasure to introduce my First Lady, my wife, Lyudmila Putin. [*Applause*]

And like President Bush did, I would also like to congratulate three Texans and two people from Waco, with the liberation by the U.S. special forces and their withdrawal from the land of Afghanistan.

Of course, it is very important to be born under a happy star and to have destiny facing your way. And indeed, I'm in agree-

ment with the President: Perhaps God was looking quite positively on this.

But there are different approaches to addressing such kind of problem. There are people deeply religious who usually say that God knows what is to befall a nation, a people, or a person. But there are people no less devoted to God, but who still believe that the people, a person should also take care of their own destiny and lives. And it gives me great pleasure to deal and to work with President Bush, who is a person, a man who does what he says.

And I congratulate those who have been liberated by the Armed Forces, and their relatives. And also, I would like to congratulate on this, President Bush.

On our way here, we didn't expect at all that things would be so warm and homey as they were at the ranch of President Bush here. Yesterday we had a surprise, but today's meeting is yet another and very pleasant surprise, indeed, for us. Indeed, in any country, the backbone of any country is not only the people who live in the capitals but also and mostly the people who live hundreds and thousands of miles from the capital.

It is especially pleasant and pleasing for me to be here in your high school. And my being here brings me to remembering those distinguished Russian Americans who contributed so much to the development and prosperity of this Nation, including a world-known composer and musician, Rachmaninoff; a well-known designer and inventor of aircraft, helicopters and airplanes, Sikorsky; and a world-renowned economist and Nobel Prize winner, Leontiev; and many others. And it is extremely pleasant for me to know that here in this room we have some people, boys and girls from Russia, who have come here to study.

Of course, serious people work in the capital cities, and much depends on them. But in any circumstances and in any situation, what they must do is to fulfill the will of their people. And being here, I can

feel the will of these people, the will to cooperate with the Russian Federation, the will to cooperate with Russia. And I can assure you that the Russian people fully share this commitment and is also committed to fully cooperating with the American people.

Together, we can achieve quite a lot, especially if we are helped in this by such a young and active and beautiful generation as the one we are meeting with now.

Thank you very much.

President Bush. Okay. The President and I have agreed to take a few questions from the students. I figured this would be a pretty good opportunity for you all to ask—

President Putin. Only questions. No math questions, please. *[Laughter]*

President Bush. Good idea. Particularly no fuzzy math questions. *[Laughter]*

Anybody got any questions? Yes, ma'am. Hold on. We've got a mike coming so everybody gets to hear it, too. What is your name, and what grade are you in?

Student. I'm Amanda Lemmons. I'm a senior.

President Bush. Senior? Good.

Future Visit to Russia

Student. Have you decided on whether you're going to go to Russia or not?

President Bush. Well—*[laughter]*—the President invited me, and I accepted. We haven't figured out a time yet. But, in that I'm from Texas and kind of like the warm weather, I was hoping to wait a couple of months. *[Laughter]* I'm really looking forward to going to Russia. I would hope that I could not only go to Moscow but maybe go to the President's hometown of St. Petersburg, which they tell me is one of the most spectacular cities in Europe. But I look forward to going. I think it is going to be a very important trip.

We have met four times now. We have made a lot of progress on coming together on some key issues. There is more work to be done. I believe the U.S.-Russian relationship is one of the most important rela-

tionships that our country can have. And the stronger the relationship is, the more likely it is the world will be at peace, and the more likely it is that we'll be able to achieve a common objective, which is to defeat the evil ones that try to terrorize governments such as the United States and Russia. And we must defeat the evil ones in order for you all to grow up in a peaceful and prosperous world.

Okay. Wait for the mike. I'm kind of getting hard of hearing.

Visit of President Putin

Student. My name is Jana Heller, and I'm in the eighth grade. And I was wondering, what is President Putin's favorite thing about Texas?

President Bush. What does he think about Texas?

Student. Yes, sir.

President Bush. Oh, favorite thing. Favorite thing. Crawford, of course. *[Laughter]*

President Putin. We in Russia have known for a long time that Texas is the most important State in the United States. *[Laughter]* But seriously speaking, we in Russia somehow tend to know about Texas rather better than about the rest of the United States, somehow—except maybe for Alaska, which we sold to you. *[Laughter]*

In my view, first of all, because, like in Russia, here in Texas the oil business is quite well developed, and we have numerous contacts in this area. And we have very many contacts in such areas as high-tech and the exploration of space. And the fact that the parliament of the State of Texas declared April the 12th—the day when Yuri Gagarin, the first man to fly to space, accomplished this—as a State holiday, like it is a national holiday in Russia, is yet another testimony of the closeness of our outlook and achievements.

President Bush. Name and grade?

Student. I'm Brian Birch. I'm a senior here. In what ways has this summit helped bring Russia and the U.S. closer together?

President Bush. Well, first of all—his question is, in what ways has the summit brought us together? Well, in order for countries to come together, the first thing that must happen is, leaders must make up their mind that they want this to happen. And the more I get to know President Putin, the more I get to see his heart and soul, and the more I know we can work together in a positive way. And so anytime leaders can come together and sit down and talk about key issues in a very open and honest way, it will make relations stronger in the long run.

There's no doubt the United States and Russia won't agree on every issue. But you probably don't agree with your mother on every issue. [Laughter] You still love her, though, don't you? Well, even though we don't agree on every issue, I still respect him and like him as a person. The other thing is, is that the more we talk about key issues, the more likely it is we come to an understanding. And so the summit enabled us to continue a very personal dialog. As well, we agreed to some significant changes in our relationship.

I, after long consultations with people inside our Government, I announced that our Government was going to reduce our nuclear arsenal to between 1,700 and 2,200 warheads over the next decade. That's a tangible accomplishment. I shared that information with President Putin. He, too, is going to make a declaration at some point in time.

In other words, this particular summit has made us closer because we've agreed on some concrete steps, as well, specific things we can do together. We're working on counterproliferation, which is an incredibly important issue, to make sure that arms and potential weapons of mass destruction do not end up in the hands of people who will be totally irresponsible, people that hate either one of our nations.

And so we made great progress. And I look forward to future meetings with the President because there's more to do to

make sure the relationship outlives our term in office. It's one thing for he and me to have a personal relationship. The key is that we establish a relationship between our countries strong enough that will endure beyond our Presidencies. And that's important so that in the long run, as you come up and as your kids grow up, that Russia and the United States will cooperate in ways that will make the world more stable and more peaceful, and ways in which we can address the common threats. And terrorism and evil are common threats to both our governments, and will be tomorrow, as well as today, unless we do something about it now. And that's exactly what we're doing.

Yes, ma'am. Ask the President a question—the other one.

Women's Rights

Student. We, as women in America, are very appreciative of all the rights we have. So, with the fall of the Taliban Government, how do you think that women's rights will affect Afghanistan?

President Bush. How do I think what?

Q. How do you think the fall of the Taliban Government will affect women's rights?

President Bush. Yes, I appreciate that. I'm going to answer it quickly, and then I want Vladimir to discuss that. He knows about women's rights and the importance of them because he's raising two teenage daughters. [Laughter] He and I share something in common.

I'll tell you an interesting story, and then I'm going to let him speak about it. First of all, there's no question the Taliban is the most repressive, backward group of people we have seen on the face of the Earth in a long period of time, including and particularly how they treat women. But President Putin, I think it would be interesting for him to discuss the concept of women's rights inside of Russia and his vision of how Afghanistan treats women. But I'll tell you an interesting story.

So, we are getting ready to have the first press conference we had together in Slovenia. And by the way, there was, I think, a thousand reporters there—it seemed like a thousand. [Laughter] And we were walking in. I said, “Say, I understand you’ve got two daughters.” He said, “Yes.” He said, “They’re teenagers.” I said, “I’ve been through that myself.” [Laughter] I said, “Who did you name them for?” He said, “Well, we named them for our mothers, my mother and my mother-in-law.” I said, “That’s interesting. That’s exactly what Laura and I did, too. We named our girls for our—my mother and Laura’s mom.” And I said, “Gosh, the thing I want most in life is for those girls to be able to grow up in a free world and prosper and realize their dreams.” He said, “That’s exactly what I hope as well.”

There’s a lot in common, even though—between our countries, even though it’s a long way away. And it all starts with the human element, the thing that matters most in life, and that is our faiths and our families and our respective loves as dads for our daughters.

But anyway, I think it would be appropriate for President Putin to talk about women in Russia and his keen desire, like mine, to free the women of Afghanistan as well.

President Putin. I do agree with the President that, indeed, such a problem does exist in the world. And in Afghanistan this phenomenon has taken an extreme form, and the disrespect of human rights has acquired extreme dimensions. Overall, women in Afghanistan are basically not treated as people.

And the testimony of the people’s attitude towards this problem, this issue in Afghanistan is, in the liberated areas, people burn their veils, or as they’re called, chadors. This is the testimony of the attitude of the people to this in Afghanistan.

In many countries of the world, especially in the poor countries, this problem exists and has acquired quite dramatic di-

mensions. To overcome this, one needs to develop specific gender-oriented programs that would include, primarily and first of all, questions related to proper education for women. And I would like to reiterate, there are many programs and many people devoted to implementing such specific, special activities for the benefit of women.

And we should not allow any atrocities or violations of human rights to happen. But what we should avoid in the course of the implementation of such programs, and as an end result of their implementation, is that a lady would turn into a man. [Laughter]

Future of Afghanistan

Student. [Inaudible]—I’m a senior. At the end of the war, do you foresee the United States and Russia being involved in the new implementation of a government in Afghanistan?

President Bush. I do. I think—and it started yesterday, in my house in Crawford, where the President and I had a very long discussion about how to make sure that the post-Taliban Afghanistan accomplish some certain objectives: one, that it be a peaceful neighbor to everybody in the region; secondly, that it never harbor and serve as a training ground for terrorism again; and third, that it be a country that doesn’t export drugs. I don’t know if you know this or not, but the Taliban Government and Al Qaida—the evil ones—use heroin trafficking in order to fund their murder. And one of our objectives is to make sure that Afghanistan is never used for that purpose again.

And so we had a long discussion about a post-Taliban Afghanistan. The President understands, like I do, that any government, in order for it to achieve its objectives, must represent all the interests in Afghanistan—not only the Northern Alliance, which has been very effective fighters on the ground, but also the Pashtun tribes, which are generally in the southern part

of the country. And we are working to figure out a strategy to make sure that that happens.

There's three phases to this battle in Afghanistan: One is bringing Al Qaida to justice, and we will not stop until we do that—that's what people need to know. Secondly is to make sure that the good hearts of the American people and the Russian people, and people all over the world, are affected. By that I mean that we get the aid to the starving folks in Afghanistan.

By the way, they were starving prior to September the 11th, because of the Taliban Government's neglect. And we're doing everything we can to make sure we get food and medicine into the regions. Part of the problem has been the Taliban. They've been stopping the shipments of food, believe it or not. It won't surprise the President, because he understands how evil they are. We're just learning how evil they are in America.

The other problem is to make sure that the distribution lines are now open, so that we can get food not only from places like Mazar-e-Sharif, that we have now liberated, but from there into the remote regions of northern Afghanistan, in particular. It's important that we do that. And so we're working hard to make sure that we accomplish that mission.

And the third objective is to make sure that, after we leave, that there is a stable government. As part of the way we built our coalition was to assure Russia—who has got a particular interest in this part of the world—and other countries that we weren't just going to come and achieve a military objective and disappear. We were going to come achieve a military objective, but also help this country become a reasonable partner in the world, a country that's able to foster peace and prosperity for its citizens. And that's an important part of this campaign. It's important.

It's also important that we stay the course and be strong, because the stronger we are as a coalition, the stronger we are

in achieving our objective, it is less likely somebody else is going to try to harbor a terrorist. Our objective is not just Al Qaida and Afghanistan. Our objective is to root out terrorism wherever it may hide, wherever it may exist, so the world can be more free. And that's a common objective of the President and mine.

You've got a question for the President? We just call him "Red." [Laughter]

Student. My name is Danny White, and I'm a senior.

President Bush. Danny White or Danny Red? [Laughter]

Student. Danny White.

President Bush. Oh, Danny White.

Nuclear Weapons Reduction

Student. You say that we've reached an agreement to declare to reduce our nuclear weapons. In reducing our nuclear weapons, are we talking about de-alerting them and taking them off of alert status? Or are we actually talking about taking apart the warheads and destroying the weapon?

President Bush. We are talking about reducing and destroying the number of warheads to get down to specific levels, from significantly higher levels today to significantly lower levels tomorrow. And, as well, most of our weapons are de-alerted. They're not on alert. However, it doesn't take them long to fire up, if we need them. Our mission is to make sure we never need them on each other. We need to get beyond the notion that in order to keep the peace, we've got to destroy each other. That's an old way of thinking. Now we're working together to figure out ways to address the new threats of the 21st century.

I would like for the President to address that, as well.

President Putin. First of all, I would like to say that it gives me great pleasure to be here in this room. And it's not quite clear for me whether I am here in the school or at NASA. [Laughter] Looking at the questions of the 12th graders, it comes

to my mind that everything is fine with this Nation and in this school.

President Bush. That's right.

President Putin. There indeed exists a number of scenarios of behavior in this situation. And the question was quite professionally put, mind you. You can just dismantle the warheads and rest them by the weapons, and to preserve the so-called strike-back capability, in order to be able to retaliate. But one may, on the other hand, destroy the arsenal. What do we do with those arsenals is subject to negotiations, with the result of those negotiations depending on the level of trust between the United States and Russia.

Yesterday we tasted steak and listened to music, and all of this with a single purpose and objective, to increase the level of confidence between the leaders and the people. And if we are to follow this road further, we will certainly arrive at a solution, decision acceptable both to Russia, to the United States, and indeed to the entire world.

Advice to Youth

Student. My name is Alicia Stanford. I'm a senior. As we go out into the world, do you have any advice for us?

President Bush. Yes, listen to your mother. [Laughter] I do. I think, follow your dreams, would be my advice. Work hard; make the right choices, and follow your dreams. The other thing is, you never know where life is going to take you. I can assure you, when I was a senior in high school, I never sat in an audience saying, "Gosh, if I work hard, I'll be President of the United States." [Laughter] Didn't exactly fit into my vocabulary in those days. [Laughter] But you never know. You never know. Trust the Lord, too.

Visit of President Putin

Student. Did President Putin like the barbecue last night?

President Bush. Ask him. [Laughter]

President Putin. Just I had a hard time imagining how could a living person create such a masterpiece of cooking, a fantastic meal. And when I said so to the President, he said, "Indeed, this cannot be done except for in Texas." [Laughter]

President Bush. I think, Mr. President, we ought to ask one of the Russian high school students for a question. Please.

Student. My name is Maria Vasulkova.

President Bush. How old are you?

Russian-U.S. Economic Relations

Student. Eighteen. What do you think, how are the improved relations between the two countries would influence the Russian economy and the future prospects for the entire world? In general, what do you think of this?

President Putin. Russia has changed greatly recently. And today, the Russian economy is on the rise. The growth rates are considerably higher than the average for the world. Last year the growth rate was about 8.3 percent; this year we're expecting the growth rates close to 6 percent.

I would like to say that, unlike other economic negotiations and negotiators, Russia is not seeking and is not expecting any preferences or any free-buys. We even pay—return the debts of Russia to the international financial institutions ahead of schedule. Russia needs only one thing to develop normally. We need normal standards, conditions, and relations with all the leading economies of the world, and primarily with the United States. And we have to get rid of the ideological barricades of the preceding decades. And the President is helping.

President Bush. Let me tell you an interesting story. We've sent teams of our economic people over to Russia. And Don Evans, who is a Texan, from Midland, Texas, who is now the Secretary of Commerce, came back and told me about an encounter he had. He met a guy, a young man in Russia who told him that 5 years ago he was really not a business guy, but

he had a dream, and he realized that he could buy bread in Moscow and transport it to St. Petersburg, and make a little profit, which was a pretty new concept for the Russian Federation. And as a result of working hard and having an environment which President Putin is working hard to create, which is an environment where there is a tax system that's fair—and, by the way, they've got a flat tax in Russia—[laughter]—he built his own business. He now owns a grocery-store-type business.

To me, that's an example of where the reforms that the President is putting in place are making sense, where people can own something—own their own business, own their own land, own the opportunity, if you work hard, to be able to have a future that you dream about. And the President understands that.

Our job as a country is to help where asked. If there's ways that we can work together for our mutual interest, we will do so. And so one of the areas where I think the average Russian will realize that the stereotypes of America have changed is that it's a spirit of cooperation, not one-upmanship; that we now understand one plus one can equal three, as opposed to us and Russia we hope to be zero. It's just a different attitude in a different era. It's time to get the past behind us, and it's time to move forward. And that's exactly why we're here in Crawford, to show the world we are moving forward.

A couple more questions, then I've got to go have lunch, and so does the President. Back there in the back.

National Missile Defense

Student. My name is Sean Law. I was wondering if you've come to a conclusion about whether or not to deploy a national missile defense system?

President Bush. Are you with the national press corps or—[laughter]? I noticed my friends in the national press corps are giving you a thumbs-up. [Laughter] Oh, you're a debater. That's okay, then. [Laughter]

This is an area that we've had a lot of discussions about. As you might remember, in the Presidential campaign I said, in very plain terms, that I felt the ABM Treaty signed in 1972 is outdated, that the treaty was signed during a period of time when we really hated each other, and we no longer hate each other; that I view the treaty as something we need to move beyond.

And I made this very clear to the President. He understands our position, that it is in our Nation's interest and, I think, in his nation's interest and other peaceful nations' interest to be able to explore the ability—to determine whether or not we can be able to deploy defensive systems to prevent people who might have weapons of mass destruction from hurting us or holding us hostage or being able to blackmail free nations.

He'll be glad to give you his position. We have a difference of opinion. But the great thing about our relationship is, our relationship is strong enough to endure this difference of opinion. And that's the positive development. We've found many areas in which we can cooperate, and we've found some areas where we disagree. But nevertheless, our disagreements will not divide us as nations that need to combine to make the world more peaceful and more prosperous.

So, Mr. President, if you'd like to address defenses, you're welcome to.

President Putin. I feel that time was not wasting by coming here. [Laughter] The President told me that we'll just limit ourselves to generalities, but he was mistaken. [Laughter] You are applauding yourselves. [Laughter]

Our objective is a common both for the United States and for Russia. The objective is to achieve security for our states, for our nations, and for the entire world. We share the concerns of the President of the United States to the fact that we must think of the future threats. And here is a common ground for our further discussions.

What we differ in is that we differ in the ways and means we perceive that are suitable for reaching the same objective. And given the nature of the relationship between the United States and Russia, one can rest assured that whatever final solution is found, it will not threaten or put to threat the interests of both our countries and of the world. And we shall continue our discussions.

President Bush. This is the last question, and then what we're going to do is, we're going to walk around and say hello to everybody, and then we're going to go back to the ranch.

Yes, ma'am.

Student. My name is Judy Swinson, and I'm in seventh grade.

President Bush. Seventh grade. Good.

Future Visit to Russia

Student. And if you do go to Russia, are you going to be taking some kids from Crawford? [*Laughter*]

President Bush. No. [*Laughter*]

President Putin. I am extremely grateful for this question. The whole audience basically started on this note, and you finalized the whole thing with your question. [*Laughter*] This is not a mere coincidence, I believe. On our way here, the President invited to come here when it's plus-40 Celsius, more than 110, and he invited me to join a plus-40 club who jog when it

is 110 and more. [*Laughter*] Well, I'll think about it. [*Laughter*]

Indeed, in our country, there are regions where people live, by the way, in Siberia, where for one—last year, for 2 weeks in a row, the temperatures were about around or below minus-50 Celsius—for 2 weeks running. My promise is, I will not terrorize your President with such low temperatures—[*laughter*—and would be glad to see any of you present here in Russia.

But first of all, I would like to address here at this juncture our hosts, the school-children, the young audience here. At the count of three, those who want your President to come to Russia, raise your hands and say yes. One, two—

Audience members. Yes!

President Bush. Thank you all. Very good night.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:48 a.m. in the gymnasium. In his remarks, he referred to President Putin's daughters, Masha and Katya; rescued humanitarian aid workers Heather Mercer and Dayna Curry; and Russian exchange students Maria Vasulkova, Timur Kurmaev, Alexander Mairin, Natalia Smirnova, Dmitri Kapitonov, Svetlana Mordasova, and Anastasia Proconich. President Putin spoke in Russian, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Statement on Congressional Action on Aviation Security Legislation *November 15, 2001*

I commend the House and Senate conferees for reaching an agreement that puts the Federal Government in charge of aviation security, making airline travel safer for the American people.

This agreement improves upon the Senate-passed legislation in several important ways, including putting responsibility for all

modes of transportation security at the Department of Transportation, where it belongs. Today's agreement also gives the Federal Government the flexibility to ensure a safe transition to a new aviation security system and will ultimately offer local authorities an option to employ the highest